Chapter VI

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CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF YAJNA

In the Brāhmaṇas there are many references to high social thinking in connection with yajña. As was mentioned earlier the basic principle of yajña is the attainment of svarga, or heaven. The Tradition renders 'svarga' as happiness. 1 Svargekāme yajeta with the desire for heaven he sacrifices. Desire for heaven means the desire for happiness. Happiness may be sought in different values; material riches, wife, children, power, triumph, and the like. We find here points of secular thinking. The sacrifice is being utilized for secular purposes; because in secular values men see that relative or temporal heaven. One who desires heaven should offer the agnihotra, 2 says the Upanisad.

Regarding Vedic social thinking and action in the community a modern scholar says:

Indian philosophical tradition has been explicitly presented by both East and West as presenting an individual effort to gain liberation. This isolation of the individual from the community - from society at large - has been ever emphasized by certain aspects of both Indian Philosophy and Indian Life. Buddhism insisted on finding liberation away from the world in monasteries; Yoga emphasized the individual effort to reach mokṣa. Vedanta emphasized the unification with Brahma through the jīva, the individual self etc. In many ways, the criticism and labels given to the East by the West - such as escapist and some sort of mystic experience reserved for a privileged few - appear, at first, correct. The social

1 cf. Māṁśa Śūtra, 3.3.15
2 Mait U 6.36. cf. SB 11.5.6. 1-3
dimension of Indian Philosophy has never been fully formalised or insisted upon, despite the implicit acceptance of all Indian Traditions in philosophy for tolerance of each other's views and for mutual dependence of one philosophic system on another and of the individual on the society as a common reservoir and body of experience has mostly remained implicit and taken for granted by the followers of one of the many philosophies of India. In the Rigvedic instance, the case is different and it is, perhaps, here that the statement for tolerance and mutual dependence is first made and made so strongly that no posterior philosophical system felt the need to over-emphasize it again.

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him. He wants to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being he seeks to improve the conditions of his social life. It involves the improvement of the conditions of his fellow beings. It is quite possible that the relative strength of the two drives, the personal and the social, in the main, is fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself, during his development, by the structure of the society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behaviour. The abstract concept "Society" means to the individual human being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his environment, to his contemporaries, and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel,

strive and work by himself, but he depends so much on society, in his physical, intellectual and emotional existence, that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him outside the framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labour and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society".

It is evident, therefore, that the dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature. That the Vedic thinkers were fully aware of this fact was born out by the theory of pāncamahāyajña the five great sacrifices, which will be discussed later in this chapter. In planning and execution of these yajñas the Rishis have taken into account the two constitutions of man, viz., biological and cultural. Man acquires at birth, through heredity, a biological constitution which we must consider fixed and unalterable; there are the natural urges which are characteristic of the human species. In addition, during his life time, he acquires a cultural constitution which he adopts from society through communication and through many other types of influences. It is this cultural constitution which, with the passage of time, is subject to change; this determines to a very large extent the relationship between the individual and society. The social significance of yajña is to be considered in the context of the cultural constitution of the Vedic society; evidences of which are available in the Brāhmanas and Kalpa Sūtras.
As mentioned earlier, the attainment of "heaven" was eagerly sought after. "Every sacrifice is a boat to heaven", says Satapatha Brahmana. Offspring, wealth and power are conducive to happiness in the physical level. Rain is necessary for prosperity and wealth. Taittiriya Samhita explains how the yugas in general can bring the rain.

In yugas invariably there are five parts. They are:

1. Ásravaya
2. Astusrausat
3. Yeja
4. Yajāmahe
5. Vasatkārah

At first Adhvaryu recites the term Ásravaya, the Agnihrtra recites the second term Astusrausat. Adhvaryu turning to hotr utters the word yeja, following this hotr begins with the word yajāmahe, and hence his recitation with vausat. It is common for all åsruta rituals.

Then the Veda gives explanation for these rituals. It is said, 'by uttering Åsravaya Adhvaryu brings the wind pre- raining (pūrvo vātah) Agnihrtra by reciting brings clouds in the air; when Adhvaryu utters the word yeja lightening comes. When hotr starts yāga actual raining starts. When he utters in his recitation Vausat the thundering (abhi + asatanavan) becomes

4 SB 4.2.5.10.
pervaded.⁵ (But we are not sure if anybody has verified this!) In another place Veda says that the offering somajuice brings down rain.⁶ It may have magical value or religious value. But the aim is significant of the social implications of yajña.

From the economic point of view rain controls indirectly the economic life of the people. Actually economics is concerned with production and distribution of wealth. Production is at the root of this. Production may be of two kinds: producing,

(1) something from the earth,

(2) something by industry.

Agricultural production is the most important of all. Society needs man power besides raw materials; man needs food and drink. Production from the earth depends upon rain. Hence the idea of rain connected with rituals pertains to the whole structure of society. And it is action that sets the wheel of the universe going. Later Gītā gives the following reason for performing action or yajña.⁷ From food comeforth beings; from rain food is produced; from sacrifice arises rain, and sacrifice is born of action.

A modern scholar Swami Chinmayānanda explains this verse thus: "The cosmic wheel of co-operative action is being narrated in the familiar language of the Vedas. The living

⁵ TS 1.6.11. Aśrayayeti puruvātam ajanayan astuṣrāusadīti abhram samapavayan yajeti Vidyutamajanāyan yeyajamaha iti pravarsayan abhyastanayan vesātkārena. This refers to haviryajña only.

⁶ TS 2.4. Sauryā Klu Va āhutih dive yristincava yetī

⁷ BG 3.14
creatures are born out of food, and they are nourished by food. The mineral wealth of the world becomes assimilable food—both vegetarian and non-vegetarian—only by the action of rain upon them. But for rains the vegetables cannot grow, and lack of proper grazing grounds is a danger to cattle-wealth. "Rain comes as a result of yajña and yajnas are performed through human action".

It is now known to any modern educated man that living creatures are born of matter. Matter is rendered consumable and digestible, nutritive and assimilable only by the action of rain upon it. But the difficulty in understanding the stanza is when we come to the next assertion that "that rains come as a result of yajñas".

Besides the traditional interpretation he gives the following explanation... here all along the Gītā the familiar terms of the Vedic period have been charged with new meanings and significances. "Rain is the necessary condition for the conversion of the mineral raw material into enjoyable and nutritive food in life. Similarly in all fields of activity there is an enjoyable profit which can be gathered only when the field comes under conditions favourable for it to produce those profits—self-dedicated activities (yajña) when performed in any given field of endeavour will be creating therein "conditions necessary for the field to smile forth" 'rain' in a luxurious "crop of profit" (ānnap) enjoyable by the society."

8 Chinmayananda, The Holy Gītā, (Bombay: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 1974) p.174
He who lives in unison with this wheel of Action is contributing to the harmony of life. The problem of food hunger and thirst are considered by the Rsis not merely on the economic plane but more deeply and philosophically on the spiritual plane. Food is identified with life itself; in the eating and preparing of food, human action and divine action are both required. The Karma marga, the way of action, is also integrated into the mystery of food. Matter and spirit are united in the food by which they subsist. As Mundaka Upanisad says: "He consists of mind, is the leader of body and life, and reposes on food directing the heart".  

From food all creatures come to be from rain comes food; from sacrifice is rain derived and sacrifice from works.  

In a way it can be said that social economy is thought over by the Vedas through the rituals. For example, praise of Indra as the god of rain and power is a common-place in the Rgveda. Indra is invariably connected with somayaga. The Veda says: "the yajna itself is the body of Indra".  

9 Mund U 2.2.8.  
10 BG 3.14  
11 Indrasya va osa yajniya tamah yadyajnah tam eva tadyajanti 
   YV 3.5. See also Ts. 7.5-16
There is a prayer for good rains and good harvest nikame nikame nah parjanyo varsatu phalinyo nah osadhayah pacyantam: Let rain come whenever we want. Like-wise let the plants ripe things and give us in plenty. The peculiar aspect here referred to is the fertility of the soil. yadyajnah tam eva tadyajante.
The other yāgas are only expansion of Somayāgas. We can take it for granted that all somayāgas are invariably connected with Indra; all the three sacrificial sessions, viz. prātassavāna, Madhyandina savana and trāyā-savāna are connected with Indra.  

Pratistotra is the main stotra in somayāga. The nature of Somayāga is decided with the help of this stotra.

Brhadva prastam bhavati

Rathantaram vā prastambhavati

So the pratistotra of Śāma Vedins and nīśkaivalya ṣastra, recited at the time are also connected with Indra. From the mantras of stotra and ṣastra and from the mantras connected with Indra in the Ṛgveda we find that Indra is the god of rain. Yaska openly declares 'tatko vrtrahā'.

While describing the 'word' 'Indraśatru' Yaska says that the enemy of Indra is the unrainning cloud. He wages war against clouds and brings out water. This natural event or a phenomenon of nature is described by the Vedic poets as a great war; not in the language of physics, but in the language of religion and poetry.

While describing Indra Yaska says, Indra is the God of Antariksa. He is identified with the multipiercing Vāyu that

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12 Indraḥ vasumān prātassavāna devatā
Indraḥ Rādrevān madhyandina savāna devatā
Indraḥ Ādityavān Trāyāsavāna devatā

Hotṛ points out this passage at the beginning of the main (sutyāhas) day of Somayāga.
makes the cloud rain. By the description of Indra and his heroic deeds the Vedic poets remind the people of the cosmic drama, enacted by the physical forces that creates and sustains their earthly existence.

Theory of Kāmyesti

In addition to the above there is a theory of Kāmyesti and Kāmyapasu where we find all sorts of social importance given in connection with individual desires. Here desires of individuals on all walks of life are taken into account.

In Yajurveda we find kāmyesti, Kāmyapasu and Kāmya somayāga. We may ask: What is the purpose of these Kāmya yajñas? It is believed that by performing rituals we get svargeloka and other lokas; or at least deriving inspiration from the divinity. But the question arises: what are the benefits of those rituals for the life here? Life here is the immediate concern of human beings. If rituals are not to help the people of this world in their life here, in course of time people won’t accept them nor follow them. In order to tackle the immediate problems of man Vedic thinkers introduced Kāmyayāga to help man in getting material benefits which are needed for his life here. A Vedic passage gives clue to this aspect of Vedic thinking.

Ubbhayoh lokayoh abhijitye
Ubbhayoh lokayoh avarudhyai

13 Nirukta, 7-6.
14 TS, MS and KS are full of Kāmyesti and Kāmyapasu. Likewise the Rgveda Brahmaṇa and Sāmanveda Brahmaṇa, while describing orderly course of rituals connected with hotṛ and Udgāṭr prescribes Kāmyasastras and Kāmyayajñas.
15 TA 6.1.1
Another passage says: 'Ubbayoh lokayoh rddhva
atimrtyum taramyasham (after getting prosperity in both worlds
I want to cross death). 16

These statements show that Vedas give equal importance
to life here and hereafter; because they knew "the mortal is
the brother" of the immortal.

The Vedic view pre-supposes an awareness that man is not
alone in the universe; struggle for existence is a fact of life;
spirits of all kind, devas and asuras, are struggling, not only
among themselves, but also with man; any abnormal interference
may cause pain, suffering and distress. The Vedas consider the
one of the central problems of man's experience, the mystery of
human sorrow. Many attempts at explanation are made in depth.
They are not on a merely sociological plane in which the pair
of opposites, pessimism - optimism, might be appropriately em-
ployed. Here the two extreme views are seen; one Vedic and the
other Upanisadic, the first minimizes sorrow whereas the second
radicalizes the nature of sorrow to such a degree that the only
resort is total escape into another form of existence.

In the Vedas the fact of suffering, the reality of human
distress, is taken as given, as a real datum, as something that
has to be dealt with. They don't bother much about the why or
the essence of sorrow. Here again we see the existential charac-
ter of the Vedic view. The Vedic poets frequently beseech the
divinity to grant protection against ills, against enemies and
evil spirits; we find them constantly praying for a long and
happy life and for freedom from suffering. 17 Man is totally

16 TB 1.2.1
17 AV 9.8
engaged in his existential struggle for well-being and he is facing the dire reality of a power that seems to rob him of his health and even of his life. Yet he is determined to face the menace, to struggle, and in the end to win. He has in his hand a medicinal herb, on his lips a sacred mantra, in his heart a burning hope, and in his mind an unflinching faith. He is well aware of the complex web of relations which criss-crosses the whole of reality and he intend to intervene in order to restore the lost harmony and balance. Fulfilment of individual desires in accordance with the cosmic order is the theory of Kāmyeṣṭis. In Rgveda we find a statement important in this connection: 'na Indrāt āte pavate dhāma kincana' even small things won't move without the help of Indra. The very same idea is repeated in Yajur Veda, taking devas in the plural. ebhyo narte pavate dhāma kincana (without devas even small things won't move). The influence of the power of the divinity upon the movements of the world finds a fundamental place in Vedic thinking, the vision of the whole is all pervading.

The desire to continue life without jarā (decrease) and old age dominated the Vedic prayers. When life starts diminishing in the father it goes on in the children and the children's children with unbroken continuity. But a fear of decay and old lurks beneath many passages.

18 AV 4.17
19 RV 9.69.6
20 TS 4.6.1
21 RV 1.89.9, II.34, 10. AV 12.2.24; BU 3.5.1
be free from old age accompanies the desire to be free from
death. Man prays for ajara (agelessness), nirjarā (freedom
from old age), and amrta (deathlessness) almost as synonyms.

In individual ethics Vedas guide man by prescribing
śanti, dānti etc. Śanti is attained by the fulfilment of
desires, not by annihilating them. The Vedic poets knew
fully well that āsoka is sorrow, is part of the human predic-
ament. There is no end to it. "Only when men shall roll up
space as if it were a simple skin, only then will there be an
end of sorrow without acknowledging God." The idea of over-
coming sorrow later took a different turn in the Gītā. The
process of eliminating sorrow is yoga. It consists not only
in adjusting to the inevitable or in acquiring a sense of
proportion; it is more than an ascetic detachment. It is the
positive and disciplined act of cutting the knot that connects
our existence with all that is perishable.

Ethical speculations of post Vedic poets elaborated a
great doctrine of the four goals or ends of human existence.
They are Dharma or right conduct, Arthā or economic interest,
Kāma or satisfaction of libidinal, emotive and aesthetic impul-
ses, and Moksa or ultimate liberation. It is useful to realise
that these are not independent values, but an integrated hiera-
archy of values. We can distinguish in them ultimate ends and
proximate values. Moksa is the ultimate end; but its seeking
accommodates other values also. Dharma is the means to libera-
tion; material prosperity and emotional satisfaction are con-
comitant results. Once this great perspective is established the satisfaction of legitimate impulses is given the most liberal recognition. Manu, while condemning Kāmya life, say, "without Kāma no one can exist".

\[ \text{Kāmatma na praśasta} \]
\[ \text{na cēhast akāmat Kāmyohi} \]
\[ \text{Vedādhigamaḥ} 23 \]

The Vedic thinkers were fully aware of the importance of Kāma or Desire. They discovered that it is the seed of mind. 24 Desire is the dynamism inherent in the whole creation. An internal and almost inaudible dialogue is going on from love to love, from desire to desire, from heart to heart. Without Kāma, it is not possible to achieve anything whatsoever. Kāma, unlike other values is the most universal gift bestowed upon the whole of creation.

The theory of Kāmya karma is based on this most fundamental aspect of individual and social life. Human life implies taking decisions, the following of a direction, the shaping of events. This requires control of desires and discipline in life. 25 Whatever be the justification for the connection bet-

23 Manusmṛtiḥ 2.2
24 RV 10.129.4 AV 19.52
25 Uncontrolled desire dissipates our mental and physical powers; Mind has got a tendency to repeat its own thoughts. When a single thought (either good or evil) is repeated off and on it creates in the mind a deepening impression and afterwards all thoughts arising in the mind irresistibly flow in that prepared channel. When once thus the direction of the flow in the mind has become fixed, all the external activities of that individual become coloured by this characteristic tendency. A mind that constantly meditates on sensuous pleasures curves out for itself a deep sensuous tendency so that even we shall discover that the individual is helplessly egged on to act in the external world as he tragically planned for himself in his mind.
ween some kāmyestis and the fulfilment of man's desires an attempt is evident in the performance of these iṣṭis to connect the earthly situation with the cosmic existence and divine reality. 26

Taittirīya Saṁhitā has devoted a Prasna to Kāmyapāsu yāga; second, third and 4th prasnas are devoted to Kāmyesti. 27 In the seventh canto Ahīṁsa, sattras, Ayanas of Kāmya nature are prescribed. And we find Kāmyesti and Kāmyapāsu. 28 In another passage Taittirīya Saṁhitā says 'he who has long been ill should offer (a beast) to Vēyu . . . 29 He who is long ill should offer to Agni (a beast) with black neck, and a brown one to Soma. 30 This is the explanation: the body of him whose illness is long goes to Agni; the sap to Soma; verily he ransom from Agni his body, from Soma his sap; and even if his life is gone, yet he lives.

26 Yajnārthatā Karmana anyatra lokoyam Karmabandhanah tadartham Karma Kaunteya muktasangah saṁcāra. Excepting the case of yajña, in all walks of life people are bound by karma with desire . . .

27 TS 2.1
28 TS 10.13
29 TS 2.1.1.
30 Ibid. 2.1.2
They believed that Soma is the depositor of seed, and Agni is the producer of offspring; so it is prescribed that he who desires offspring should offer to Soma a brown (beast) and to Agni one with a black neck. The point here is not whether these remedies are effective or not but that these assertions are induced by a remarkable sense of unity and interpenetration of things. Nothing is alien to these thinkers. Everything is related to everything else either directly or indirectly. This organic view of the universe is the point of social thinking of Vedic man. His social thinking is part of his cosmic view. The importance of Soma is connected with the ground and support of this earth itself. Rgveda says:

By Truth is the Earth Supported,
by the Sun is the Heaven supported,
by cosmic order the Ṛgveda stands
and Soma is set upon the sky. 31

A cosmic net work of interpenetrating things is apparent in this vision of life. Each object in the world is not merely itself but involves every other object.

Sometimes the prescriptions seem strange and ridiculous for a modern reader. For example, one who is engaged in a struggle should offer a dwarf (beast) to Visnu; 32 then he becomes Visnu and conquers this world. The reason for this prescription is given as follows: The Gods and asuras strove for these worlds; Visnu saw this dwarf, he offered it to its own deity, then he conquered these worlds. 33

31 RV 10.85
32 TS 2.1.3.
33 cf. Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, p.39, 41, 156.
This justification is not clear to one who is not familiar with Vedic Mythology. Almost all such identifications and justifications are connected with some myths.

Another isti of much hygienic value is also given in Taittiriya Samhita. There is no dichotomy between an ethical order and a cosmic order for Vedic thinkers; the ethical order is not ignored; the really existential order is anthropocosmic and it includes both the ethical or personal and the cosmic in one.

Traidātavesti (for balancing three dhātus of the body) and pasubandha are ordained.

Similarly there are istis for

1) One who desires food
2) One who is long in exile
3) One who desires offspring.
4) One who desires power
5) One who desires splendour
6) One who desires rain
7) One who desires a village
8) One who desires a kingdom
9) One who desires prosperity etc. . . .

All these are designed and performed in the sacrificial frame.

34 TS 3.2.11, 2.4.12.
35 This isti is now developed as Prānāyāma in the yoga system.
36 Different varieties of this Isti are referred to:

For example TS II, 1.5, gives a prescription different from II, 1.2. "He who desires offspring should offer a barren cow to the plants, the plants hinder him from offspring who being fit for offspring does not obtain offspring . . . ." The justification is in accordance with their theory of creation (referred to earlier) . . . . the plants are the waters, man is what is not: verily the waters give him being from non-existence etc. . . .
They pray for prosperity not only for tomorrow, but for all days, past, present and future. For example there is a prayer like this:

Prospereity today, O Savitur, prosperity tomorrow, day by day prosperity mayst thou procure for us; through this prayer may we win the prosperity. Of many prosperous dwelling, O God. 37

It can easily be seen that these ists are connected with hygienic, economic, social and political principles. In Taittirīya Kathaka there is a yajña sūkta where yajña is glorified, nay, deified. 38 There is yajña for the yajña also. (yajñīya carum), but only in Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa we find a vivid description of the effects of yajña. The mantras say: "The yajña is the Lord of money, lord of houses (accommodation), lord of grains or fertility of the soil. The yajña connected with mantras go to devas (Devas also are described as yajñīya). After describing in this way mantras say that this yajña must develop the cow and horses. The Vedi of the Yajña gives good sons and good heroes. The grass which is spread on the Vedi is beautiful, more than any other of the same kind. Let all gods protect this yajña. 39

37 TS 2.1.11
38 TK 3.2
39 Here one more point is noteworthy. "Lord of dwelling houses" are referred to in this prayer. One of the concerns of yajña is to secure man good accommodation.
General Character

The social implications of yajña are carried out further in Grhyayajña. According to the Vedic vision, knowledge can not be separated from a certain way of life which becomes its living manifestation. To acquire knowledge means to undergo a transformation; one could even say that the knowledge is the transformation. These grhyayajñas are expected in course of time to refine and purify or transform the individuals that make up a society of Aryans. They are so designed as to stimulate the householder to experience the wholeness of nature and the interconnectedness of things; and to give him training in the art of living with nature in harmony.

The Grhyakarmans are simple rituals on the model of Srauta yajña. The main principle is that individual affairs play an important part in Grhyakarmans. Problems of life start from birth and end with death. There are important occasions in life; birth, education, marriage and death. On all these occasions there are Grhyakarmans. They purify the body, and through the body, the mind. While Samnyāsins reach realization of self exclusively through contemplative discipline with the performance of scriptural ties the house-holder (grhaustha) also reaches the goal through the performance of ties. Mandana Misra in his Brahmaśiddhi mentions seven different theories about the relation of Karman and jñāna.  

1. The injunctions to the ritual part of the Veda tend to turn man away from their natural activities in the direction of meditative activity enjoined for the realization of the self. 

2. These injunctions are intended to destroy desires through a process of enjoyment and thus prepare the way for meditation leading to knowledge of the self.

3. The performance of Kārmaṇa is necessary to discharge the three debts (ṛatraya) which is the essential prerequisite for self-knowledge.

4. The activities prescribed have a dual function (Śamyoga prthaktva) of leading to the fulfilment of desires expected of them and of preparing for self knowledge.

5. All kārmaṇa is intended to purify men and prepare them for self knowledge.

6. That self knowledge is to be regarded as a purificatory aid to the agent; serving the requirements of the various activities prescribed in the kārmaṇa kāṇḍa.

7. Kārmaṇa and jñāna are opposed to each other.

Mandana Misra is inclined to accept the views indicated in 4 and 5. The performance of rites is a valuable accessory to the contemplation on the content of verbal knowledge (śābdajñāna) arising from the great texts (mahāvākyas) of the Upaniṣads in bringing about the final manifestation (abhivyakti) of the eternally self-luminous light of Ātman. Only on account of this purificatory effect that the performance of rites is described as a sanskāra; obligatory without which no man gets a chance for better life.

The householder of the Vedic period was expected Bodhāyana wants to exploit simple Grhya rituals for the benefit of individuals. Like Kāmyeṣṭi, Kāmyapāṣu he prescribes Kāmya-grhya kārman also. But he advises the sacrifices to take the Ājya and puruṇuvākya from Kāmyeṣṭi or Kāmya pāṣu. Main idea of the Veda is to help man to lead a good life with all the comforts of the material world.
to keep up the tradition of the domestic ritual. He was to maintain a fire in his house or any suitable place outside the actual house. The fire is called Grhyaogni, the domestic fire.  

**Apastamba** says that the knowledge of the ceremonies (Grhyayajnas) is derived from practice (and not from the Sruti). 

They should be performed during uttarayana (northern course of the sun), on days of the first fortnight of the month (on suspicious days). But ceremonies belonging to the Fathers are performed in the second fortnight (of the month). The sacrifices of the domestic ritual were expected to be performed normally by the householder himself; not priests are necessary. The animal victim is prescribed for a guest reception, for offerings to the Fathers, and at marriage; the cow is the normal victim, but a goat is allowed to take its place.

**The various offerings**

The daily sacrifices include offerings at night to Agni and Prajapati, and morning to Sūrya and Prajapati. 

**The pancaMahāyajnas**

Man is not an individual but a person; that is, he is not an isolated being but a constitutive relationship. This

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42 Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras*, (Delhi: National Publishing house, 1959), p. 42. This section was prepared mainly with the help of this book.

43 Ap GS 1.1, SBE, Vol. 30

relatedness exists not only between man and God but also between man and his fellowmen. To humanity (manusayata), the human world (manusyaloka) is both a complement and often a supplement. Man is man in and with his environment. The awareness of this fact is remarkably revealed in the scheme of Pancamahāyajnas. These are the five daily sacrifices which a householder ought to perform regularly. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa states: "There are five great sacrifices, the great sattras. They are the Bhūtayajña, the Nṛyajña, the Pitṛyajña, the Devayajña and the Brāhmaṇayajña." 45

The Śākalyāyana Grhya Śūtra defines each of these yajnas.

Here now, if he makes oblations in the sacred fire, this is the sacrifice to the gods; if he makes bali offerings, this is the sacrifice to the beings, if he makes offerings to the fathers, this is the sacrifice to the Fathers. If he studies Vedic texts this is the sacrifice to Brahman. If he gives food to men this is the sacrifice to men, he should perform these sacrifices every day. 46

Explaining a verse from Gītā Rachakrishnan says:

The two sides of religion, the personal and the social are emphasized by the Gītā. Personally, we should discover the divine in us and let it permeate the human society must be subdued to the image of the divine. The individual should grow in his freedom and uniqueness and he should recognize the dignity of every man, even the most insignificant. Man has not only to ascend to the world of spirit but also to descend to the world of creatures. 47

45 SB 11. 5.6.1
cf. A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith, Vedic Index of Names and Subjects, 2 Vols. Banaras, 1956 "Offering to gods, to beings, to the fathers, the study of the Veda and charity, the cornerstone of the orthodox Hindu sociology, has been enjoined for the first time in a Brāhmaṇa text."

46 AS GS 3. 1. 1-4

47 BG V. 25. op. cit. p.184
This is practically bhūtyajña; this is the spirit of bhūtavajña. To know the conditioned-self as identical with the un-conditioned Brahman (in the Ātman) is to sacrifice the self in Brahman.

Three of these five mahāvajñās are grouped into one and called by the name rṇatraya.

Theory of rṇā

A responsible and enlightened person or the house holder is regarded as the hub of the wheel of social life, round whom the welfare of the Society revolves. His is a life of a balance of forces - social duty, personal desire and spiritual aspiration.

rṇā is based on social obligation of individuals. The thought economists of yore put this idea in this single word as precisely as they could. Theory of rṇā has been elaborately dealt with in smrtis.

rṇāni trīni apakṛtya mano mokṣe nivesayet only after discharging your debts you are allowed to enter the moksāsrāma.48

Debt is committed to others, repaying it is a social obligation, as part of the fulfilment of one's desire. This idea is introduced by Brāhmaṇas in connection with a Brāhmaṇa's life. Jāyamāno vai brāhmaṇahtribhir mairjāyate.

He is indebted to rāis, devas and pītras - definitely, one who wants to live a noble and enlightened life must study

48 of. BG 3.6. "He who restraining the organs of action, sits thinking in his mind of the sense objects, he of deluded understanding, is a hypocrite."

A desire - stricken man is not eligible for jñānayoga; even if he can control his organs of action.
and acquire knowledge which is mainly the gift of tradition; by continuing the studies of ancient people one becomes indebted to them. 'Satapath Brāhmaṇa puts this idea as follows:

'Verily, whoever exists, he, in being born, is born as (owing) a debt to the Gods, to the Reis to the fathers, and to men.  

Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa says:

Verily a Brāhmaṇa who is born is born as owing a debt in respect to three things; in the shape of sacred duty to the Reis, in the shape of sacrifice to the Gods, and in the shape of offspring to the fathers. Free from debts he who has a son, who is a sacrificer, who lives (for a time with a guru) as a religious student.

Every person is a link in the chain of his species. So for the propagation of his species he wants to reproduce himself through his progeny. Prajyā pitṛbhyaḥ (The biological force is there to stimulate him for his yajña). As he was born a son of his father, in his turn he repays his father by procreation, by continuing his existence in successive generations. For the Vedic man marriage is a sacrifice. A happy marriage should be one that is in accordance with the cosmic harmony of the universe. It is one of the ways of human participation in the creative tension of dualities (and also the overcoming of them) which constitutes the pattern of the whole reality. Man and woman are halves only, each of them representative of the existential split in the existing order of the world. The desire

49 SB V. 1.7.2  
50 TB 6. 3, 10, 5  
51 TB 2.2.2.6
to overcome that split by a confidence is in the unvarying well-structured pattern of the universe.

Likewise he is indebted to the Devās, because he is the production of devas; through his body he repays them. It is illustrated in the Gītā: "By this (yajna) foster ye the gods and let the gods foster you; thus fostering each other you shall attain to the supreme good". By yajna we satisfy devas. By mutual help man achieve prosperity. Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa prays:

May we be debtless in the third world!
what paths there are trodden by the gods
and trodden by the fathers, may we abide
debtless on all (those) paths!

It is legitimate to conclude that service and sacrifice are the two important aspects of yajna. These pañcamahāyajñas reveal the secret of these two aspects of social life. The theory of rṣa helps us to understand the way in which the sacrifice reintegrates man into the whole of reality. By sacrificing to the gods he restores his unity with the heavenly world; by reciting the Vedas, he acquires wisdom, by having progeny he establishes his links with mankind, past and future; by practicing hospitality he continues with his fellow beings in an actualized present. These yajñas do not impoverish (him) man; on the contrary they enrich him by letting him partake in the totality of the universe. It is also seen that, even before the Upaniṣadic spiritualizing of sacrifice, the conception of pañcamahā-

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52 TB 2.6.9.2. naro vai devānām grāmah
A fine trait of the best and enlightened socialistic thinking is available in connection with the idea of rṣa.

53 BG 3.11

54 TB 3.7.9.8

55 cf. SB 1.7.2. 1-5
yajña saves sacrifice from becoming a mere speciality of the priests and enables it to penetrate the whole of man’s life.

There are other kinds of yajñas too. There are numerous agricultural festivals considered as sacrifices, for example, a spring festival in the month of Chaitra, another festival in the month of Śrāvana, to appease the snakes; there is a sacrifice to Prajāpati on the full moon of Āsvini, the Āgrahāyana festival of the beginning of a new year (at the full moon day of the month Mārgasīrśa) etc.

Birth Ceremonies

The tissue of man’s life is no longer nature but culture. The purificatory acts or ceremonies of the Vedic Indian is part of his culture and refinement in the context of his society. The Grhyasūtras describe various acts of purification to be performed from conception to death of a person. They are also known as Saṃskāras. Even Srauta sacrifices also are included in the Saṃskāras. The Saṃskāras are the sacraments which sanctified the rhythm of domestic life. Śabara explains the Saṃskāra as that which makes a certain thing or person fit for a certain purpose. And Kumārila in Tantravārtika says that Saṃskāras are those rites which impart fitness by removing taints and generating fresh qualities. They synchronised with the inner changes that took place in the individual during growth, conferred a new status on him and impressed upon him the consciousness of a new responsibility. By conferring privilege and exacting duty they prepared the individual for corporate life. The first feeding of the child

\[56\] Gaut. DS 7. 13-19
with solid food, naming him and the initiation into studies were some of the early Saṃskāras. The first major sacrament was marriage. Here all the forty Saṃskāras are classified into two categories.\textsuperscript{57}

1) \textit{Sarīra} Saṃskāras and
2) Yajñas

According to \textit{Vaikhānasa Grhyasūtra} there are eighteen saṃskāras concerning the body (\textit{sarīra}) viz.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Rtusangamana, Garbhādhāna, Puāsavana
  \item Śimanta, Vīnu-bali, Jēta Karman, uttāna,
  \item Nāmakarana, Annaprāśana, pravāsāgamana,
  \item Pinda vardhana, chaudakarman, Upanayana,
  \item Parāyana, Vratabendha, Visarga, Upakarman,
  \item Samāvartana and Pānigrahana; and
\end{itemize}

Twenty-two yajñas (sacrifices), viz., five daily yajñas as one, seven pākayajñas, seven Haviryajnas and seven Soma yajñas; thus there are forty saṃskāras, now we shall consider each of these Saṃskāras briefly:

1. \textit{Garbhādhāna}

This is the rite of securing conception; depositing the seed into the womb; a detailed account of this is given in \textit{Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad}.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{57} Garbhādhāna, puāsavana, Śimantonnayana, Jētakarman, Nāmakarana, Annaprāśana, Chaula and Upanayana; the four Vratas connected with Vedic studies; Samāvartana and Vivāha; five daily Mahāyajñas; seven Pakayajnas, viz., Astaka, Parvama – sthatipāka, Śraddha, Āgrahāyani, Chaitri and Asvayuji, seven Haviryajnas, viz. Agnyādhyeya, Agnihotra, Darsapurānasā, Āgrayana, Caturmasya, Nirūchapaśubandha, and Sautramśa; seven soma sacrifices, viz.; Agniṣṭoma, Atyagniṣṭoma, Ukhya, Sodasī, Vājapeya, Atirātra and Āptocryema.

\textsuperscript{58} BU 6.4. 13-22
2. Puṣāvane

This is to secure a male child. The beginning of the third month of pregnancy is the time for the Puṣāvane.

3. Śimantonnayana

Generally Śimantonnayana is performed during the first pregnancy of the wife, in the fourth, 60 or sixth or eighth month. The rite mainly consists of parting of the hair of the wife.

4. Jātsakarman

According to Vaikhana Grhya Sūtra 61 the wife is made to enter sūtikālāya (lying in Chamber) with mantra; Jātsakarman chiefly consists of a number of acts such as Homa, Āyusya, prāsena, Āsmābhimarsana, Medhājanana, and stana-pradāna. Āyusya is the sacrifice for the longevity of the son. Prāsena is feeding the child with honey and gold rubbed in clarified butter. This feeding is to be done by the father of the child. Medhājanana is performed in the same way as prāsena. This is intended for the production of intelligence. 62 Stana-pradāna is giving the breast to the child. Gobhila Grhya Sūtra says: "Let him (father of the child) say: "Cut off the navel - string and give the breast to the child."

After consecrating the child's mouth, the father washes the breast of the mother and makes the child suck it, with the

59 Ibid., 11.6.1
60 Gobh. GS 2.7.11
61 Vaikh GS 3.14
62 Ibid. 2.7.22
words, "suck life; suck old age; suck truth; suck splendour; suck vigour; such prosperity of wealth; suck spiritual brilliance etc."

5. **Nāmekkarna** is the ceremony of naming the child. A name is given on the tenth or twelfth day after the birth, after the ritual end of the period of confinement.

6. **Annaprāśana**

   This is the ceremonial feeding of the child with solid food. Generally this takes place in the sixth month after the birth of the child.

7. **Tonsure**

   This is the rite of cutting the hair of the child for the first time. This is also called chaula or Čudākarna.

8. **Upasayana** (literally the leading near), bringing close to the guru, and to the sacred knowledge. This rite is very important as it marks the formal initiation of the child into the field of education. According to Āpastamba the Upasayana should be performed in the eighth year after the conception for a Brāhmaṇa, in the eleventh year for a Kājanya, and in the twelfth year for a Vaisya. Spring, summer, autumn are the fit seasons for the Upasayana corresponding to the order of castes. The student is otherwise known as a Brahmaśārin. A uniform is prescribed for brahmaśārins. It consisted of an animal skin (Ajina), a piece of cloth (vāsas), a girdle (Mekhala) and a staff (Danda). Specific rites are also laid down regarding every aspect of a student's life.

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63 Kātheke GS 34, 4-7
64 GS 4.10. 2-3
65 SB 11.5.4. 1-17
9. **Samvärtana**, the end of student life. The term signifies the coming back of a student on the completion of his studies. A ritual bath is taken at the samvärtana. After that the student is called Śnātaka. He can be likened to a graduate of modern times. The hopes, aspirations and avocations of a student of that age are revealed in the account of the effect of the bath under different Naksatras, given in Ājimāṇa Gṛhya Sūtra. It says:

He should take the bath under the Naksatra Rohini belonging to Prajāpati, if he wishes to get offspring; under Mārgasīrṣa belonging to Soma, if he wishes that Soma sacrifices may fall to his share; under Tasya, belonging to Brhaspati, if he wishes to get spiritual lustre; under Hasta belonging to Sāvitrī, if he wishes to be impelled by Sāvitrī under Ṛmurāchas belonging to Mitra if he wishes to be dear to his friends; under Sraṇa belonging to Vismu, if he wishes that the sacrifice may fall to his share.

He takes off the upper garment which he has worn during his studentship, and puts on another. The girdle, the staff, and the black antelope's skin he throws into water. Then he is having a complete shave followed by a bath. He puts on new dress and gold ornaments and prays: "I have obtained an auspicious name like (the name) of a father of gold. Thus may (the gold) make me shine with golden lustre; (may it make me) beloved among many people; may it make me full of holy lustre."

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66 Ap GŚ 5.12. 1-14

67 Jaim GŚ 1. 19; 17, 13

68 This passage is closely related to Vedic Mythology; to untie the knots of mythology requires another effort.

69 Hiranyakesins GŚ 1.3. 10-6
When he is to return home the guests who come to honour him prepare for him Madhuparka (honey-mixture). He partakes of it with the formula "I eat this for the sake of brilliancy, of luck, of glory, of power, and of the enjoyment of food."

An ideal convocation address is given in the Teiti-riya Upanisad with directions to the Gurukula - leaving graduates as to how they should behave and spend their lives in society.

This passage is a fine example of their highly developed social thinking.

10. **Marriage**

Gobhila Grhya Sūtra says that a Śnātaka should take a wife after he has studied the Veda, and has offered a present to his teacher, with the permission of his parents. And it also insists upon taking a wife who does not belong to the same Gotra and who is not a 'sapinde' relation of his mother.

Procreation of progeny and the attainment of spiritual merit through mutual co-operation were regarded as the chief purpose of Aryan marriage. Boudhāyana is of opinion that the quality of the progeny depends upon the form of marriage.

The performance of a series of rites was considered to be essential for marriage. There are a few important rites.

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70 Ibid. 1.4. 14-2.
71 **TU** 1.11
72 Goph. GS 3.4. 1-15
73 Ap. DS 2.6, 14, 16-19
74 BDS 1.11.21, 1. Accordingly eight forms of marriage are mentioned: They are Brahma, Daiva, Prajapatiya, Ārya, Gāndharva, Āsura, Raksasa and Paśuca.
1. The performance of the homa (offering of Ājya oblation into the fire).
2. Pānigrahana (taking hold of the bride's hand).
3. Lājahoma (offering of fried grains into the fire).
4. Asmārohana (making the bride tread on a mill stone).
5. Agni-pradaksīna (the circumambulation of the nuptial fire 'by the couple), and
6. Saptapādī (walking together seven steps).

After saptapādī the bridegroom addresses the following Mantra to the spectators; "This bride is auspicious; Come together and behold her. Having blessed her with good fortune, please return to your houses."

The marriage of Sūryā has served as the symbolical marriage ritual for Hindus for thousands of years. The descriptions have a poetic flavour; and the analogies indicate the extremely subtle nature of the thought. Such passages demonstrate a highly sophisticated stage of Vedic culture.

75 'India of Vedic Kalpa Sūtra,' p. 239
76 RV 10.85. 6-7, a description of the bridal procession is given as follows:

The Raibhi metre was her bridal friend,
the Narasāmśī hymn her escort home;
Lovely was Sūryasrobe decorated by the gatha song
Thought was the pillow of her couch,
sight was the Unguant of her eyes
Her jewellary was sky and earth
When Sūryā went to her husband
The Vedas refer to Biological symbolism of marriage

The primary function of marriage is racial, that is, the continuity of the race through the procreation of children. After accepting the bride formally given away by her father, the bridegroom puts a very significant question to the guardian of the girl, who has given this bride to me? The answer is "Kāma or the God of love".

The bridegroom reminds the bride, "First Soma had thee for his bride, the Gandharva had thee next. Agni was thy third husband; thy fourth husband am I, born of man. Soma gave thee to Gandharva; the Gandharva gave to Agni; and Agni has given thee to me for wealth and sons". 77

The verses are explained by Sāyana thus, "while yet desire for sexual intercourse has not arisen Soma enjoys the girl; when it has just begun the Gandharva takes her; and at marriage transfers her to Agni, from whom man obtains her (possessing capacity) for producing wealth and sons". The Smrtis offer a clearer interpretation of the above obscure passage. Soma gave them (women) purity; to Gandharva bestowed sweet speech; and Agni Sarvamedhatva or purity. Therefore women are always in possession of Sarvamedhatva or purity.

These suggestions are supported by the belief that Soma is sasyādhipati, the Lord of the vegetable world; and presides also over the mind . . . The physical growth of the girl, including that of the hair is under the care of the God Soma. The mind of the girl also develops under his guidance.

77 RV 10.85. 40, 41.
The Gandharva is the master of graces; it is his function to make woman's body beautiful and to add richness to her tone. Under his care the pelvis develops, the breasts become round and attractive. The eyes begin to speak the language of love and the whole body acquires rich hue. His work is advanced and he hands her on to Agni; who is Agni? He is the lord of Fire. The Lord of Agni tattva. Nature is radiant with colour and joy in spring and summer, Animals breed in spring, Agni is the fructifier. It is he who brings about the menstrual flow and women then can bear children. Agni then gives her to man, her fourth Pati or Lord. In the grasping of the hand ceremony also the biological aspect of marriages is fully brought out. The bridegroom says to the bride, 'the Heaven am I, the Earth thou. Come let us marry. Let us unite our sperm. Let us beget offsprings, let us acquire many sons and may they reach old age. Loving bright with genial minds, may we see a hundred autumns, may we live a hundred autumns.

The conception of evil or impurity

The term Sāmakāra has the element of purification in it. Purification presupposes evil or sin or impurity. So a study of the conception of sin of the Vedic seers will surely enlighten us in grasping the why and the wherefore of the Sāmakāras.

Evil can have two sources, external and internal. All sorts of violence, harming, hurting and afflicting comes from the outside; it encroaches upon us and hinders the happy and smooth development of our being. Here the evil is transcendent. Anxiety, narrowness, lack of expansion, a feeling of imprisonment within oneself all point to internal source of evil. They are inherent in our own nature. We would like to be different
and yet we are not. Evil is here immanent. Evil can also spring from maladjustment and malfunctioning of a good system. Here evil depends on the direction events and values take.

Sin is here conceived of as more than simply a pollution. All these three aspects of sin should be considered not in isolation but as part and parcel of the total reality, because the really existential order is anthropocosmic and thus includes both the ethical (sin) and the cosmic (evil) in one. In the Rgveda the God is invoked to set free the sinner from his bonds. A primitive conception of sin as pollution (which can be removed by physical means) is found in the Rgveda as well as in the Atharvaveda. For example in the Rgveda we find the following prayer to Agni:

If we have sinned awake, asleep, Knowing, unknowing, through evil nature, may Agni banish far from us all such hateful wicked deeds!  

Athravaveda presents another prayer.

Sin of the mind, depart far away!

Again in the next mantra,

Whatever wrong we have committed, 0 Agni, waking or sleeping, by ill will or hatred or cursing, remove it from us, whatever displeases You, Thrst it afar.

A prayer to Soma

In whatever way we have sinned with our eyes or our minds or words, awake or asleep, may Soma by his own pure nature cleanse us.

78 RV 7.86.4.
79 RV X.164.3.
80 AV 6.4.5.1.
81 AV 6.45.2.
82 AV 6.96.3.
Open yourself, create free space; release the bound one from his bonds! Like a new-born child, freed from the womb, be free to move on every path.\textsuperscript{83}

The root of prayers like these can be traced to the nature of these duties as conceived by the Vedic seers. Varna is connected with the waters. It may be, Varuna's power to loosen the bonds of sin is derived ultimately from the cleansing power of the waters.\textsuperscript{84} Similarly Agni has been invoked to loosen the bonds of the sinners.\textsuperscript{85}

The prayer to the gods for compassion and mercy is not without significance. Mercy and compassion have their place in the framework of the Universe. They are within the scope of rta and dharma. They are always functional and they function according to a set of relational factors; the human will along with its sentiments and feelings provide the 'field' for the operation of such factors. The properties of such a field can be changed or modified by prayers, Sam\=sk\=aras and sacraments thereby helping the self to acquire the "escape" velocity for its journey towards itself; towards a full awareness of itself.

Ethical aspect of Rta Satya as the truth of things and Rta as the course of things, we have already referred to in Chapter III. Here we shall consider aspects of Rta applied to social thinking. We may agree with Daniel H.H. Ingalls when he says that "Hindu

\textsuperscript{83} AV 6.121.4
\textsuperscript{84} RV 1.32.22
\textsuperscript{85} RV 5.2.7.
civilization developed a cultural harmony which is almost without parallel in the history of mankind. Its social system is explained by its religion, its art by its metaphysics. Everything is interwoven". This is fully evident when we understand how the Vedic thinkers co-ordinated the "Order of the world" and the ordering of man's conduct in society. 86

"Order of the world" means literally "the course of things". The course of things provides the standard of morality. Rta as mentioned earlier, represents the orderliness and Eternal law of the universe. In matters ethical it stands for the same principle in human conduct. "Orderly and consistent conduct is the essential feature of the good life. Disorder, often represented in the form of falsehood, is the greatest evil. Virtue is conformity to the cosmic law. 87

Angirasas became sons of light because of their attachment to Rta, says Rigveda. 88 The evil doers do not travel the path of


87 Source Book in Indian Philosophy. p.25

88 RV 10.67.2

Rtaṃ Samsantah rju dīḍhyānā
divas putrāsṇo asurasya vīrāḥ
vīram padam angirasoc dādhana
yajnaśya dhāma prathamam mananta.

Praising the Eternal Law, thinking straight, Sons of Heavens, Sons of light, Angirasas, held the rank of sages and first observed the statute of sacrifice.
Rta. Erhaspati rides the awful but refulgent car of Rta. Rta also serves as the origin of the basic ethical concept of dharma in later Indian philosophy. Love of fellow men, kindness to all, and obedience to our duties to the gods and to men are enjoined.

The idea of yajña is rooted in dharma; "travo dharma ekandha yajaas taw danam.

As shown earlier dharma essentially means "the law of being of anything in the world". It is very well known that which determines one man's personality as distinctly different from another is the texture of the thoughts entertained by him. This texture of his thought is again in the turn determined by the pattern of thinking which his mind had gained in the past. These pre-determined channels of thinking created by one's own earlier way of thinking are called the vāsanās. Thus dharma should be conceived as the vāsanās in our mind.

Rta also refers to Social Order Mitra and Varuna have been spoken of as kings (ksatriyas) and upholders of Eternal law.

39 RV 9.73.6
Those that from ancient seats manifested themselves the guides of song and counsellors of movement, from these the eyeless and the deaf have turned aside. The evil doers travel not the path of eternal law. "Here the eyeless and the deaf refer to pasyannēpi ca na pasyati moodhān" of Sankara.

90 RV 11.23.3. Having chased the wicked ones and darkness Thou mountest Thy refulgent car of order (Rta) The awful car, O Brahaspati! that subdues the foe, slays the wicked, cleaves the stall and brings the light.

91 RV 8.25.8
Reference to four orders of society is found in the 
Aṣvamedha. Dharma is the fundamental principle on which the 
Vedic social thinking is founded. As given earlier "Dharma 
Upholds the world". And our world is organised into societies. 
The Vedic society, is made up of four Varnas, According 
to Satapatha Brāhmaṇa these varnas are Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, 
Vaisya and Śūdra. In the opinion of Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa, 
Brāhmaṇa is characterised by purity (sat), Kṣatriya by splendour 
(prakāśa) and vaisya by wealth and nourishment (rayi and pusti).

The present day caste system of India, i.e., caste by 
birth – has no scriptural sanction. In Aṣvamedha a poet says: 
A bard am I, my dad’s a leech, mammy lays corn upon the stones, 
striving for wealth, with varied plans, we follow our desires 
like kine, flow, Indu, flow for Indra’s sake. 

92 RV 10.90.12
93 Catvāro vai varnāḥ brahmaṇo rājanyo vaiśayah śūdraḥ
94 JB 1.243. According to Mahābhārata the whole world 
was originally of one class but later it became divided 
into four divisions on account of the specific duties. 
"Śūdra is described as the undeveloped physical minded 
man". Aurobindo: Foundations of Indian Culture, P.162.
95 RV 9.112.3.
In a note to Gītā IV.13 Radhakrishnan says:

The fourfold order is designed for human evolution. There is nothing absolute about the caste system which has changed its character in the process of history. To say it cannot be regarded as anything more than an insistence on a variety of ways in which the social purpose can be carried out. Functional groupings will never be out of date and as for marriages they will happen among those who belong to more or less the same stage of cultural development. The present morbid condition of India broken into castes and subcastes is opposed to the unity taught by the Gītā which stands for an organic as against an automatic conception of society. The Aryan—Sanskrit sociological thought which first defined and named this fourfold structure of society, is as modern as Vedic. 104

The first reference to a four-fold division of men we get in the Purusa Sūkta. They were born of the cosmic Purusa. They were looked upon as the functional organs of society like the head, the arms and breast, the abdomen and thighs, and the feet of a human body in order. The idea of society is to translate the order of the cosmos (Ṛta) into social life. This is the view of Varna of an enlightened man whose consciousness embraces the universe, to him the universe becomes his "body", while his physical body becomes a manifestation of the universal Mind, his inner vision an expression of the highest reality, and his speech an expression of eternal truth and spiritual power.

Varna and Sacrifice: According to Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the society is made up of four varnas or characteristics. 96 They are Brāhmaṇa, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Śūdra.

Catvāro vai varnāḥ brāhmaṇo rājanyo vaiśyāḥ śūdrāḥ.

96 SB 5.4.6.9.
104 S. Radhakrishnan, tr., B.G. IV.13
The word Varna literally means 'colour'. But it is doubtful if the four castes were distinguished from each other by the colour of their skin. The first three varnas, viz., Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, and vaśya, were called Aryas to distinguish them from Sudras. They were also called dvijas (twice-born). The Sudras had no right to upanayās or to perform Vedic sacrifices. They were also called ekajajātyah i.e. they were people having physical birth only. Thus there is provision for entertaining the hypothesis that the Aryas and the Sudras were the two main divisions of Indian Society. The theory of functional groups forming separate classes in society has been advocated by many scholars. One scholar says:

The causes leading to caste-differentiation between the members of the Indo-Aryan community might be traced to the differences of occupations. It is an admitted fact that the persons who follow the same occupation are naturally more intimate with each other than with those who follow a different occupation; and thus they form a kind of compact group in society. Such functional groups are no doubt found to exist in all times and climes. But when occupations become hereditary owing to certain circumstances and continue to remain so for generations together, functional groups based on such occupations assume the form of separate classes in society. The formation of different classes among the Indo-Aryans might have proceeded on similar lines. In the age of the Rgveda when occupations were most probably not

97 G.D.S. 6.11
98 G.D.S. X. 49-50
hereditary there were only functional groups of poets and priests, of warriors and administrators, and of agriculturists and traders. In course of time, occupations in Indo-Aryan society tended to become hereditary and consequently functional groups began to petrify into hereditary classes. 99 Regarding the economic condition of the Brāhmaṇa period of the Aryan society, it is said that all sections of society made their due contributions to the welfare of society, though caste-wise allocation of occupations was an established fact. "Husbandmen produced abundant food grains to feed the whole nation; herdsmen reared plenty of livestocks to provide milk, meat, hides, fleece, and means of transport; handicraftsmen manufactured necessary articles and implements; traders arranged for the exchange of necessary commodities; administrators maintained peace and order; artists entertained the people; and teachers and priests perpetuated cultural heritage and sublimed the thoughts and feelings of the people." 100

Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa seems to take the names of the castes more as nomenclatures of certain traits than as representing individuals. Brāhmaṇa represents purity (satt), Ksatriya represents splendour (prakāśa) and vaisya represents the traits of wealth and nourishment (rayi and pusti) 101 the terms Ksatriya and Brāhmaṇa do not stand for the degenerate concept of the two castes as they exist to day; they stand, it seems, for the active qualities of adventure and dedicated work, and

99 Ram Gopal, India of Vedic Kalpasutra p.116
100 Ibid. p.132
101 JB 1.243
for the nobler and subtler qualities of head and heart, making man see visions of perfection as philosophers and thinkers.

Etymologically, "Brahma" is derived from the root Brh, to grow, and Ksatra from Ksata, to hurt. Ksatra is the ability that saves a thing from hurt (Ksata and the root tr). Even deas were seen differentiated on these principles. For example, Agni and Brhaspati stand for Brahme, Indra and Mitra for Ksatra.

Agni Brahma Indrah Ksatre 102
Mitrah Ksatra Brahm Brhaspal 103

The dvijas were entitled to study the Vedas and to perform sacrifices. The Sudras were prohibited from studying the Vedas. Even the recitation of vedic Mantras or the consecration of the three sacred fires were not allowed to Sudras from the Brāhma period.

The Rgveda speaks of the fourfold interests of life.

"strengthen the power of knowledge (Brahman) and strengthen intellect;
strengthen the ruling power (ksatra) and strengthen heroes
Give strength to the milch-cow and strengthen the people.105

Of these Brahman corresponding to truth, represents the cultural force; ksatra, corresponding to Ṛta represents the political power, and the milch-cow(wealth) represents the economic force of society. Three types of men emerge the Brāhma, the philosophic man; the Ksatriya, the political man; and the

102 SB 10.2.7.5, 9.
103 TB 2.5.7.4.
105 RV 6.35, 16-18
vaiśya the common man. In the scheme of yajña Agni represents
the Brāhmaṇa's ideal. 106

The importance given to the office of Kingship and the
installation of the Ruler is clear from the ritual of Rajasūya.
It is only after the great function that the chosen person is
installed on the throne of authority and the subjects recognise
him as their ruler. In Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa the Brahmapriest
takes hold of the hand of the rāja and introduces him to the
people thus; Here is your protector (bhārata) the king of
this great government of the people (janaśāya). 107 "He is
to treat his subjects as his children". 108 He is expected to
uphold the dharma and is bent upon maintaining a balanced admi-
nistration. 109

Analysing the social impacts of confusion of castes,

Aldous Huxley says:

Any confusion of castes, any assumption of one man of
another man's vocation and duties of state is always,
say the Hindus, a moral evil and a menace to social
stability. Thus, it is the business of the Brāhmaṇins to
fit themselves to be seers, so that they may be able to
explain to their fellowmen the nature of the universe,
of man's last end, and of the way to liberation. When
soldiers or administrators, or usurers, or manufacturers
or workers usurp the functions of the Brāhmaṇins and for-
mulataed a philosophy of life in accordance with their
variously distorted notions of the universe, then society
is thrown into confusion. Similarly, confusion reigns
when the Brahman, the man of non-coercive power usurps
the role of the Kṣatriya, or when the Kṣatriya's job of
ruling is usurped by bankers and stock jobbers, or finally
when the warrior caste's dharma of fighting is imposed,
by conscription, on Brāhmin, Vaiśya and Śūdra alike. The
history of Europe during the later Middle Ages and Renais-
sance is largely a history of social confusions that arise
when large number of those who should be seers abandon

106 RV 8.44.21. But sometimes he is spoken of as the king.
Agni is supreme among those who live the holy life.
He is the holy sage (vīpīra), the holy poet (Kavi).

107 TB 1.7.4.2
108 TB 1.7.8-6
109 SB 5.4.1.5
spiritual authority in favour of money and political power. And contemporary history is the hideous record of what happens when political bosses, business men or class conscious proletariats assume the Brāhman's function of formulating a philosophy of life; when usurers dictate policy and debate the issues of war and peace; and when the warrior's caste duty is imposed on all and sundry, regardless of psycho-physical make-up and vocation".\(^{110}\)

In a humorous vein Rgveda mentions, the diverse callings of men. The hymn (dedicated to Soma) gives a vivid picture of the highly organized Vedic society and the performance within it a wide range of human activities.

1. We all have various thoughts and plans and diverse are the callings of men. The carpenter seeks out that which is eracked the physician the ailing, the priest the Soma-press. Flow Soma - juice, for the sake of the Lord!

2. The smith with his store of seasoned plants, with his feathers of birds and stones for the tips, enkindles the flame to make arrows and then seeks out a client bulging with gold. Flow soma-juice for the sake of the Lord!

3. I am a singer, my Dad's a physician, my Mummy's task is to grind the corn. Diverse are our callings but we all aim at wealth, we run in its wake like a cow herd trailing cows. Flow Soma-juice, for the sake of the Lord.

4. A horse desires to draw a light cart, gay hosts to evoke a laugh and a jest, a male desires his mate's approach (the phallus desires a hairy fissure), a frog a flood to plunge within.

Flow Soma-juice, for the sake of the Lord!

The Rgvedic sage prays for strong intellect and for the power of knowledge; for the fighting power and prosperity for people.

One asks his deity: "will you make me guardian of the people?" The Vedic people did not wish to be ruled by the wicked. \Rgveda puts their wish thus: "Let not the wicked rule us." Mā no duḥsamsa Teṣaṁ

Indra is the ideal hero of the Vedic people. He is the model for their king. The Vedic poet has the picture of his society ruled according to the cosmic order. There is reason to believe that the Vedic people were familiar with some sort of democracy. Indra desires his power from the people. "Thou art Indra, thy strength lying in thy people." The concept of an ideal citizen is suggested in a praise of Soma.

"To him who makes the offering, the Deity (Soma) gives the milch-cow. He gives the fleet steed. And he gives the son, who is fit for work, fit for home, fit for the social assembly, fit for the council, (political) and a glory to his father". The ideal son is Karmaya i.e., capable of Karmasādanya, fit for Sadāna or the household; Vidathya, fit for vidatha, the assembly - may be social and religious in nature; and sabhēya, fit for sabha, the political body; and he is to bring glory to his father.

As mentioned earlier the Vedic poet is always aware of the cosmic law or Rta in his conception of everything, whether social or individual. Indian ethics is 'cosmobiological' and that inevitable consequence is that every action is bound to its due reaction.

111 RV 3.43.5. Kuvinmā gopām Karase janasya
112 RV 10.25.7
113 RV 10.173.1
114 RV 1.91.201; Yv 34.21. Somo dhenum somo arvantam āsum soma vírem karmanyam dadati sadanyam vidathyaṃ sabhēyaṃ pitṛaravam yoدادasad āsmai
The aesthetic aspect of rta

Rta gives order to the course of things; there is symmetry and harmony in the form and formation of matter because of rta, and this implies beauty. The aesthetic sense of the Vedic poet is beautifully expressed in the following verse; he compares the streamlets to unwedded young virgins skilled in law (rta).

"Indra let the unwedded young virgins skilled in law, as fountains, bubbling, flow streaming forward. He flooded with water the desert and thirsty plains, and milked the dry cows that had a mighty master." 115

The description of the Usas is a fine specimen of the aesthetic sense of the Vedic poet. Nature becomes beautiful through conformity to rta. "Bright on her path, sublime, by law, true to eternal order, red-tinted, far shining; Usas, Goddess, bringer of light." 116

Gods are all beautiful because they are the upholders of rta. They discipline life and form; discipline of form makes beauty. It is the working of the Eternal law that gives the world its form and position, to us our nature and nurture. 117

Firm seated are the foundations of Eternal law. In its fair form are many splendid beauties. By eternal law have the worlds entered the Universal. These and similar verses suggest the highest refinement of the mind and the finest culture of the Vedic poet.

115RV 4.19.7
116RV 5.80.1
117RV 4.23.9
Rta as rite

Rta is rite as well as right. As a ritual rta signifies the orderly performance of the ceremonial part of the worship. Here it can be said that the form of the yajña conforms to the laws of order. The order observed at the ritual is supposed to be a symbol of Eternal Order. There is this prayer. "Let not the licentious enter the place of rta." 118

The earth is sweet to the man who lives by law (ṛtayate). 119

In another place it is said that rta (as ritual) is expected to vary with time.

Varuna makes songs of prayer
We worship him who finds the path
He reveals the hymn in the heart
Let the rite be born a new. 120

(Heaven and earth know this)

Rsi says: "Thou, O Agni, for the treasuring of riches, make the singer famous. Thou highly landed; May we improve the rite with new performance O Heaven and Earth; with the Devas, Protect us." There are many passages in the Vedas that exemplify the remarkable feature of the Vedic view that it embraces life in all its fullness in the most immediate and material way. To live a full life, means to prosper in the world, in love, in one's family, in the community, and in other affairs. Life is emphatically earthly, and Vedic Man has no qualms about enjoining it. Without

118 RV 7.21-5
119 RV 1.30. 6-8
120 Brhma krnti varuna Gatuvdham tamimahe
Vyurnoti hrdamatim navyo jayatam rtam.
indulging in any psychological or psycho-analytic theory, the Veda rejects every kind of repression and every form of renunciation of positive values. Of course, this is in accordance with the other important feature of Vedic culture, the integration of experiences. It proceeds neither by accumulation nor by elimination but by integration, which we have seen in Chapter V.

Prayer for a prosperous and a powerful state

There is a prayer in Yajur Veda that gives us a bird's-eye-view of the socio-political thinking of the Vedic reis.

O Brähman may there be born in this kingdom the wise man (Brähman) illustrious for spiritual knowledge; may there be born the ruling man (rajanya) heroic, skilful archer, piercing with shafts, mighty warrior; the cow giving plentiful milk, the ox good at carrying, the swift horse; (and) the highly accomplished woman. May there be born to the sacrificer a youthful son, winning victory, best of chariot fighters, worthy of the assembly, May rain fall as we desire. May our fruit-bearing plants ripen. May our exertion and rest prosper.

Taking Yajnaphala (fruit of sacrifice) as a whole these are things expected or prayed for: Food, drink, meditation, resolve, articulation of the Vedic Mantras for Śanti (spiritual peace), concentrated hearing, Prāna, sound body and mind and sense-functioning, high status in society, rulership, sobriety, large family and happy home, peace and plenty for all, beatiful dawns and good night's rest, happy seasons, happy friends, fearlessness, excellent medicines, strength, manliness, fortitude, proficiency in art and sciences, ease and eloquence, fertile fields and rich

121 YV (VS) 22.22
gardens with fine yields, milk and honey, friends to share food and drink, jewellery, cattle, resourcefulness, energy, power of decision in the performance of duty, unembarrassing fields of movement and action, knowledge of past and future, grace of the Vedic divinities and time and space, means to celebrate sacrifices, heaven and then immortality, love of mother earth, divine mercy and eternal life, all this the Yajamana wants through the grace of vajra.

The Vedic thinkers wanted to make all the people Āryas or noble and wise

They hoped to turn all into Āryas; to make them live by Rta, the moral law. Rigveda gives expressions to this motto of the Vedic people. "May the libations of soma juice, active in streams of righteousness (Rta), he glorifying God, Āryanising all! 122

Yajurveda gives indication of a highly developed personality and a refined outlook of the Vedic thinker. The Vedic poet prays for 'atonement of sin not only against God, against the Fathers, against men, but also against himself ... committed knowingly and unknowingly. 123

The prayer for social unity and universal happiness in Rigveda is highly inspiring.

Assemble, speak among yourselves,
be united in your minds,
a n ancient Devas, being united, partake of the offerings. 124

May your aim be common, your assembly common, common the minds

122 RV 9.63. 4-5
123 YV 8.13
124 RV 10.191. 2-4
and the thoughts of these united. A common purpose do I lay before you; and worship with your common oblation. Common be your aim, and your hearts united; your minds be one so that all may happily live together. Ours is a planetary citizenship—and integral experience (fusing all arts, science, inner and outer life etc.), an evolutionary endeavour and a unitive goal.

**Service and Sacrifice**

The ideal of service and sacrifice is the most outstanding social significance of **yajña**. The past lives in the present, so that even the most individual parts of a man's work "may be those in which his dead ancestors assert their immortality most vigorously". The sacrificer both takes from and gives to the past. His relation to the past particularly his taking from a long line of the illustrious dead leads to his depersonalisation. "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of a sacrificer is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

It is said that "Yama gave up his own dear body" to find a path for mortal men from this world to another. Thus he sacrificed himself for a noble cause. This self sacrifice is the highest of sacrifices.

Here we are reminded of the sacrifice of Purusa for the creation of the world. By the great sacrifice of Purusa the world's pattern is kept up. The directions and the intermediate directions are his respective sides.

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125 RV 10.12-8
126 RV 10.14.15. calls him the path.
And the world thus created by Purusa by sacrifice wants to be sustained by sacrifice. This has a fine illustration in Āvamedha vajra. As shown in Chapter V the conception of Āśva is explained in the Chāndogya-panisad.127

The Āśva carries the gods under the name of vājin, the Asuras under the name of Arvan, and men under name of Āśva. This growing organism of the universe is the Prajāpati – the Āšva – of the Aryan seers. The Āśva functioning with all his different limbs is only one – a unity. So, as the limbs of the body stand in a living, intimate co-operation for the functioning of a living body, all created forms, animate and inanimate should function harmoniously for upholding the cosmic life of Prajāpati.

This is true of social life too. How many people have laid down their lives for the welfare of the society?

Sāvitrī tells Yama that good people maintain the world through their suffering and sacrifice. Sante bhūmim tapasā dhāryanti. Jesus Christ laid down his life to atone for the sins of the human race and to establish the principle of purity of love for his brethren and for their Father in the highest Heaven. In modern times the life of Mahātma Gandhi is a fine example of this yajna of self sacrifice. How many noble lives have been sacrificed at the altar of the struggle for Indian Independence? How many soldiers and precious things have been sacrificed to win the world wars. The good people suffer for the sorrows of the world prayāse lokatapena tapyante sadhavo janēh. They consume themselves in order that they may light the world.
It is by the self-sacrifice of the parents that children are born and it is by their sacrifice that they are nurtured and brought up. The whole world of cosmic powers and phenomena function instinctively in the service of all. Even before the life could appear on the face of the earth, the elemental forces had prepared the field with their constant activities performed in the sacred spirit of dedication. Even when life developed and multiplied at all levels, we can easily recognise different degrees of yajña activities which keep up the harmonious growth of existence. This is practically expressed in the Gītā. 128 This sort of sacrifice is eternal and basic to universal existence. The Vedic rituals serve to demonstrate this universal fact with reference to 'process and Reality'. Moreover, man is hedged in by physical conditions. There is always the constructive and disruptive counterparts of the world; both act and react on each other and can be called daivyā and āsurī forces. All suffer through action and reaction and cannot find happiness easily. The Rasis tried their best to find out some means following which at least some people can attain happiness. They discovered the principles of sacrifice.

Unless man becomes wise in the use of his body, mind and other faculties and finds a mental equilibrium he cannot become happy. Radhakrishnan explains:

By means of sacrifice interpreted here as means of self control and discipline, we strive to make knowledge penetrate our whole being. Our whole being is surrendered and changed. A right enjoyment of sense objects is compared to a sacrifice in which the objects are the offering and senses the sacrificial fires. Every form of self control, where we surrender the egotistic enjoyment for the higher delight where we give up lower impulses, is said to be a sacrifice. 129

128 BG 3.10
129 Radhakrishnan, Gītā 4.26. p.166
Man cannot amass wealth without committing any sin and riches make him proud and unsympathetic. Many think themselves as gods or superior beings and do not realize their responsibilities. All suffer from want of sober-mindedness or through want of associations for mutual co-operation and improvement or for want of higher religious education. Imitation of others though necessary in the beginning, has to be regulated afterwards in the light of experience of life through sound judgement. Adversity, the first path to truth and life of the spirit is wrought with human suffering. Wisdom is seldom gained without suffering. Besides, truth and sentiment are mingled together in our customs and religious practices and have to be distinguished or understood after an analytical study of the sources (the Vedas) on which they are based. However meaningless ceremonies have arisen, and how prejudice and sentiment, not well balanced, rule our conduct in life should be known after their examination in the light of Vedic teachings.

Moral prescriptions are mainly required for regulating the social seeking of promiable values, for it is here that competitive tendencies can emerge as a serious threat to social harmony. They are also necessary to stabilize right conduct as social habit. But habit tends to become unconscious and may even become an orthodoxy where outward behaviour is insisted upon while the inner intention is forgotten. Again and again the moral treatises of Vedic thinkers call attention to this danger! Gautama, while speaking of the necessity for a person to be sanctified by the sacraments, takes care to point out that the mere formal performance of these rites would be of no efficacy in securing the ulti-
mate goal of human life, unless they have developed in him the
great qualities of inner self, compassion for all creatures,
forbearance, freedom from envy, purity of mind, body and speech,
freedom from over-exertion due to unworthy ambitions, suspicious
and hoiyous acceptance of ordained duty, self-respect which will
prevent the individual demeaning himself before others and con-
tentment free from the desire for the possession of others. After
enumerating these eight qualities Gautama declares: "He who is
sacctified with the forty sacraments, but whose soul is destitute
of these good qualities, will not be united with Brahman."130

The details of the performance of ṣajña throw a flood of
light on the cultural ways and means of life or living in general;
and emphasises the fact that the primary object of life both pri-
ivate and public shall be the same. The principle of ṣajña served
the Vedic thinkers as a frame of reference which holds good to
all the functions (of all beings) individual, social and cosmic.
This universal possibility of comprehension and correlation is a
unique aspect of ṣajña. Our times have seen two great break-
throughs - in atomic physics and molecular biology, concerning
respectively matter and mind. Why not the crucial break through
in mind, from mind to 'super mind' an exploration, of conscious-
ness, making possible both 'Man-transformation' and 'world-trans-
formation'. At any rate, the philosophy of ṣajña holds out to
mankind such a hope and assurance projecting an understanding of
this world as a single unit (visvam).